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(20) W. Whiten

THE

Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger

Of being

Righteous over-much;

With a particular VIEW to the

Doctrines and Practices

Of certain

MODERN ENTHUSIASTS.

BEING THE

Substance of FOUR DISCOURSES

LATELY

Preached in the Parish-Churches of *Christ-Church*, and St. *Lawrence Jewry*, *London*; and St. *Martin's in the Fields*, *Westminster*.

BY JOSEPH TRAPP, *D.D.*

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ECCLES. vii. 16.

Be not righteous over-much; neither make thyself over-wise: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?

RIghteous *over-much?* may one say: Is there any Danger of that? Is it even possible? Can we be *too good?* Or if that might be; is there any Occasion, however, of warning against it in *These Times*, when the Danger is manifestly on the contrary Extreme; when all manner of Vice and Wickedness abounds to a degree almost unheard of? I only answer at present, that to be *righteous over-much* is itself, very often at least, one Sort of Vice and Wickedness; and a bad Sort too: I say very often, at least; because sometimes 'tis rather *Folly*, than *Sin*; always one or the other; and not seldom a mixture of Both: And even when 'tis

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Folly only, it has a dangerous Tendency, and is of pernicious conſequence: And there ſeems to be a great deal of it in This Age and Nation. For the reſt; theſe Queſtions will be fully anſwer'd in the Progreſs of my enſuing Diſcourſe. I only obſerve farther in this place, that the Word תשמם in the Original, which our Verſion renders *deſtroy thyſelf*, may well be tranſlated *ſtupify, beſot, or infatuate thyſelf.* I ſhall take in both; and ſhew

I. *Firſt*, What we may reaſonably *underſtand* by being *righteous overmuch*, and *over-wiſe.*

II. *Secondly*, The extreme *Weakneſs* and *Folly* of it; and its Contrariety to ſound Reaſon, and true Religion. *Why ſhouldeſt thou become ſtupid, and fooliſh?*

III. *Thirdly*, Its *dangerous Tendency*, and *pernicious* Conſequences. *Why ſhouldeſt thou deſtroy thyſelf.*

IV. In the fourth and laſt place, I ſhall add ſomething by Way of Application.

I. *Firſt*

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I. *First* then, What we may reasonably understand by being *righteous over-much*. It will not a little contribute towards the clearing of this Matter, to lay before you in a Short View the various Interpretations which have been put upon this Text by learned Commentators or Expositors: Which I shall therefore do in the first Place; and then come to a more close and determinate State of the Point before us. Setting aside then the Exposition of Those who would have the Words to be spoken, not in the Person of *Solomon* himself, but in that of a carnal, and corrupt Reasoner, persuading Men to Indifference and Neutrality in Religion; as if he should have said, since Vertue is exposed to so many Dangers; be not zealous or pertinacious in its Cause, but yield and give way to Times and Circumstances: I say setting aside This, (tho' 'tis certain that the Royal Preacher, in several Passages of this Book, speaks, by Way of *Prosopopœia*, not his own Sense, but that of others, even of Infidels, and Enemies to all Religion) and supposing him here, to deliver his own real Thoughts; he means, say some, not

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Righteouſneſs itſelf, but the Appearance of it, as thus; Do not arrogate to yourſelf more Vertue and Wiſdom than you really have. He had been treating before, ſay others, concerning the lawful, right, and laudable Uſe of worldly Goods; and here he guards againſt an Extreme upon that Subject. Do not out of an immoderate, and miſtaken Sanctity utterly reject all Enjoyment of worldly Pleaſures, Honours, Riches, &c. nor too much macerate the Body by Watchings, and Faſting. Again; Be not *ſuperſtitious*: An over-ſtrain'd Piety degenerates into Superſtition. Thoſe are *righteous over-much*, who to the Works preſcribed, and commanded by God add Works of Supererogation, extraordinary uncommanded *Perfections*, as they imagine them to be; tho' in ſo imagining they are quite miſtaken. Others thus; Be not too rigid, and ſevere in cenſuring, and reproving your Neighbour for his Faults. Many take it for the utmoſt Rigour of *punitive Juſtice*, to the Excluſion of Equity, by inſiſting upon the ſtricteſt Letter of the Law, and Severity of Juſtice; when, in all Reaſon and Equity, there is Room for Mercy: Here that common

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common Saying takes Place; *Summum jus ſumma injuria*, the height of Juſtice is the height of Injuſtice. Hither likewiſe may be reduced the Error of thoſe who think it neceſſary to go to *the very utmoſt* in every thing; As alſo the Indiſcretion of an overheated Zeal in expoſing ourſelves to Dangers, when there is no Neceſſity, nor even Occaſion for it. This is not only *going to the utmoſt*, which is not always *neceſſary*; but going *too far*, which is always *wrong*.

For in the next Place (that we may now come to a more cloſe, and direct State of the Point before us) moſt Vertues have an Extreme on each Side. We may *over-do*, and be *exceſſive*, as well as *under-do*, and be *defective*. But to be *too good* is impoſſible: What then is the Meaning of being righteous, good, or vertuous *over-much?* I anſwer, there is, and can be, no ſuch Thing, *properly*, *ſtrictly*, and *literally* ſpeaking. But the Expreſſion is owing to the Imperfection of Language. One of the Extremes, *viz.* That in Exceſs, tho' allowed to be a Fault, is made (very improperly) to denominate the Perſon to whom it belongs *exceſſively*

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finely vertuous. Thus Men are ſaid to be charitable, ſober, merciful, &c. *to a Fault*: Which is the ſame in Effect, as to ſay, they are ſo *very vertuous* that they are *vicious.* If we make this Exceſs to be a *Fault*, as it certainly is; we ſhould not join it with Charity, Sobriety, Mercy, &c. from which it deviates; unleſs we would make an unaccountable Coalition between Vice and Vertue. The Truth of the Matter therefore is, as I ſaid: We *want Words* to expreſs thoſe Vices by, which are the Extremes in Exceſs of thoſe Vertues juſt now mentioned, and ſeveral others: And ſo, when we would communicate our Thoughts concerning them, for want of a better Way of ſpeaking, we ſay ſuch a one is devout, temperate, &c. *to a Fault.* Thus by the Scantineſs of Language we join together two very different, and diſagreeing Ideas: and a very great Defect in Language it is. Whenever any Vertue riſes beyond its due Bounds, and runs into an Extreme; it loſes its Nature, and degenerates into Vice: And ſince it loſes its Nature, it ought to loſe its Name too. Strictly, and properly ſpeaking therefore, 'tis impoſſible

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ble to be *righteous over-much*: But the Meaning is, be not exceſſive in any Thing, tho' the Thing itſelf be never ſo good: For tho' the Thing itſelf be good, the Exceſs of it is Evil. Thus for inſtance: *Alms-giving* is very excellent; but to beſtow *ſo much* upon *the Poor*, as not to make *ſufficient* Proviſion for one's *own Family*, is a great Sin. *Raſhneſs*, or *Fool-hardineſs* is a Fault on the *exceſſive* Side of *Courage*, as well as *Cowardiſe* on the *defective*. To be conſtant and frequent *in Prayer*, and other religious Exerciſes, is the Duty of every Chriſtian; but that to *ſpend ſo much Time* in thoſe Exerciſes as to neglect *all other* neceſſary Duties, or even any *one* other neceſſary Duty, is *contrary* to his Duty, the very Sound of the Words ſufficiently informs us. *Pride* is a great Sin; but an *exceſſive over-ſtrain'd Humility* is a Fault too, as well as Folly; tho' not ſo great a one as the other. The Vice of *Intemperance* in Eating, and Drinking, is plain to every Body: On the other Extreme, to *eat* nothing but *Bread* and *Herbs*, and *drink* nothing but *Water*, unleſs there be a particular Reaſon for it, is *Folly* at beſt; therefore *no Vertue*:

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Vertue: 'Tis the *Exceſs* of Temperance, therefore a *Fault*, tho' not near ſo great a one, as the other Extreme, Intemperance. It may here be obſerved, by the Way, that the two Extremes of many Vertues are in the common Books of Ethicks wrong mark'd, diſtinguiſh'd by Names quite contrary to what they ſhould be. Thus (to omit ſeveral other Inſtances) to Temperance, ſay they, is oppos'd in Exceſs Intemperance; in Defect, too much Abſtinence. Intemperance indeed conſiſts in one Sort of Exceſs, *i. e.* The Exceſs of Meat and Drink: But ſure it is the Defect of Temperance. The Exceſs of it is too much Abſtinence.

But to return. Wholly abſtaining from Things *indifferent*, and innocent in themſelves, as *forbidden*, and *unlawful*, is a ſignal Inſtance of being *righteous over-much:* And ſo on the other hand is making Things *indifferent* to be *neceſſary*, and matters of *Duty*. This leads us to obſerve, that if the Exceſſes of ſome Vertues be (as they are) rather *Follies* than *Faults*, or rather *Faults* than *Sins*, in the Perſons themſelves who practiſe them; yet to *impoſe them upon others* as neceſſary, and

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and to deter others from the contrary, as unlawful, is greatly and grievously sinful. Because it is *teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*, (as our Saviour taxes the Pharisees, *Mark.* vii. 7.) adding to the Laws of God; and by their own Authority (*i. e.* none at all) making that necessary on the one hand, and unlawful on the other, which God never made so: Besides their obtruding some Doctrines, and Practices, as taught and commanded by the Christian Religion, and as the Perfection of it, which are in truth directly contrary to it.

In short; to be *righteous over-much* is to place much Religion (where there is really none, but the Contrary) in *Extraordinaries*, in *new Inventions*, and striking out into *Bye-paths*. Some Things of this Nature, I doubt not, proceed from a *good Design*; tho', I think, not from a *good Judgment*. For instance. Let all Men practise all Christian Vertues; particularly go to Church even upon ordinary Days, as often as their necessary Business will permit them; and upon Sundays, attend Divine Service from the Begin-

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ning to the End, Morning, and Afternoon, doing every Thing which our Church preſcribes in her publick Offices; then go home, and employ a good Part of the Remainder of the Day (for it is not neceſſary they ſhould ſo employ it all) in Reading, Meditating, and Praying, partly in private, partly with their Families: Whatever religious Exerciſe goes beyond this, were, I think, better let alone; I ſay, I think: For I do not preſume directly to cenſure, much leſs condemn it; but only ſpeak my own Opinion. Yet one or two Circumſtances more I muſt take leave not only to mention, but ſomewhat more than mention. For *Laymen* to officiate in *reading Prayers* to any *Aſſembly*, except their *own Families*, is an Encroachment upon the Office of thoſe who are ordain'd to holy Functions; and I fear takes off from the Reverence and Reſpect due to them. And for *unletter'd Laics* to take upon them to *expound* or *interpret* the Scriptures, is neither laudable, nor juſtifiable; it tends to the Confirmation, not the Removal of Ignorance; and lays a Temptation in their Way to *think more highly*

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highly of themſelves, than they ought to think.

Which naturally leads us to that other Expreſſion of the Text, *neither be thou over-wiſe*, i. e. (as the wiſeſt of Men, *Solomon* in another Place, and the great Apoſtle St. *Paul* after him ſpeak) *be not wiſe in thine own Eyes*, or *in thine own Conceit*. Prov. iii. 7. Rom. xii. 16. or (in other words) do not imagine thou art wiſer than thou really art. And the Connexion between being *righteous over-much*, and being *over-wiſe*, i. e. vain and ſelf-conceited, is very evident both from Reaſon and Experience. When once a Perſon has taken it into his Fancy that he is more than ordinarily *holy*, he of courſe imagines that he is more than ordinarily *wiſe*; for what (ſays he) is Holineſs, but the trueſt Wiſdom? And beſides; one of his tranſcendent Advances in Piety muſt needs be aſſiſted with extraordinary Illuminations to improve his Underſtanding: And ſo he goes on, miſapplying thoſe Words of the Pſalmiſt, *I have more Underſtanding than my Teachers; for thy Teſtimonies are my Study; I*

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am wiſer than the aged, becauſe I keep thy Commandments. Pſal. cxix. 99, 100.

However that be; do we not ſee in fact, that theſe *righteous over-much* are likewiſe *over-wiſe*: i. e. *wiſe in their own Conceits?* Do not ignorant, illiterate People preſume to *expound the Scriptures?* which can never be done as it ſhould be, but by Perſons skill'd in Languages, Hiſtory, and Antiquity, and ſuch as have made Learning their Study, and Profeſſion. Suppoſe another, tho' in holy Orders, yet a raw Novice, very lately initiated into them, ſhall, upon the Principle of being *righteous over-much*, take upon him, at his firſt ſetting out, to execute as it were, the Office of an Apoſtle, to be a Teacher, not only of all the Laity, in all Parts of the Kingdom, but of the Teachers themſelves, the learned Clergy, many of them learned before he was born; to reflect upon, and cenſure them as if they did not know their Duty, or would not do it without being inſtructed, and reprov'd by *Him*; what is This but an Outrage, upon common Decency, and common Senſe; the

Height

Height of Presumption, Confidence, and Self-Sufficiency; so ridiculous as to create the greatest Laughter, were it not so deplorable and detestable, as to create the greatest Grief and Abhorrence? Especially; if vast Multitudes are so sottish, and wicked too, as in a tumultuous manner to run madding after him? Surely it is shocking, and prodigious, for so *young a Son of* Levi *to take so much upon him.*

Having thus under my First Head consider'd what we may here reasonably *understand* by being *righteous over-much*, and *over-wise*; I proceed now to shew, under my Second,

II. The extreme *Folly* and *Weakness* of it; and its Contrariety both to sound Reason and true Religion. This may in a good measure be collected from what has been said already, in stating the *Nature* of being *righteous over-much.* For from thence it has appeared, that it is an *Extreme*; that it is *Excess*; that it is a *Deviation from Vertue*; therefore *vicious*; therefore contrary to *right Reason*, and *true Morality*; therefore to the *Christian Religion.* But I shall now

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now more explicitly unfold this Matter, by inſtancing in ſome Particulars not yet mention'd, and enlarging upon others, which have been only mention'd; by which the *righteous overmuch* would impoſe their *extraordinary Novelties* upon us; give a ſhort Specimen (for that will be ſufficient) of our Arguments *againſt* them; of Theirs in defence *of* them; and of our Anſwers *to* them.

Theſe Doctrines and Practices of theirs, I ſay, are ſo far from being the Perfection of Chriſtianity; that they are repugnant to it, as well as to Reaſon. Theſe Men tell us, that according to the Spirit and Genius of the Chriſtian Religion, we muſt abſolutely renounce all the Poſſeſſions and Enjoyments of the World, and have nothing at all to do with them; "That not "only the Vices (I ſpeak the Words of "one of theſe Writers) * the Wickedneſs, and Vanity of this World, but "even its moſt lawful and allow'd "Concerns, render Men unable to enter, and unworthy to be receiv'd in-

"to

* Mr. *Law's* Chriſtian Perfection, p. 71.

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" to the true State of Chriſtianity." That † " the Wiſdom from above con-" demns all Labour, as equally fruit-" leſs, but that which labours after " everlaſting Life." So here's an utter Condemnation of all Trades, and of all Profeſſions except one, if that be excepted; of all Buſineſs, and ſecular Concerns whatſoever. According to the ſame Divinity, 'tis a Sin to be rich; a Chriſtian ought not to leave an Eſtate behind him, when he dies; but is obliged to ſell all he has, and give it to the Poor. Going to Law is abſolutely unlawful, even on the defenſive Side; ſo that if a Man ſues you for your Houſe or Land, without the leaſt pretence of Right, you are bound to recede from your Right, and let him have it, rather than defend it. That no Sort of Gayety or Expenſiveneſs in Dreſs is permitted to any Perſons whatſoever: No ſort of Recreation or Diverſion; nothing but an univerſal Mortification, and Self-denial: No Pleaſure, but from Religion only; ſo that to taſte an agreeable Fruit, or ſmell to a Roſe muſt be unlawful: The bodily Appetites

† P. 73.

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Appetites must not be in the least Degree gratify'd, any farther than is absolutely necessary to keep Body and Soul together, and Mankind in Being: No Allowances are to be made for Melancholy, Misfortunes, or human Infirmity: Grief must be cur'd only by Prayer; to divert it (as the World speaks) by worldly Amusements, is carnal and unchristian: No Books must be read, but Books of Piety: Even the noble Writings of the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* are unfit to be perus'd by a Christian; who ought to renounce human Learning, and *know nothing but* Jesus Christ, *and Him crucify'd.* Now is it not a sufficient Confutation of all This, to appeal to common Sense; and then ask every Christian, Whether what is inconsistent with That, can be consistent with Christianity? The Apostle, *Rom.* xii. 1. bids us present our *Bodys* to God; but these Men talk as if we had no Bodys at all. The true and judicious Professors of our Religion, say of Reason and Christianity what St. *Paul* says of the Law and Faith, *Rom.* iii. 31. *Do we then make void* Reason *through* Christianity?

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anity? *God forbid*; *yea we eſtabliſh* Reaſon.

But Thoſe who maintain theſe ſtrange Doctrines will perhaps alledge, that we ſuppoſe the Thing in queſtion: That the ſaid Doctrines are contain'd in Scripture; therefore are agreeable to the Chriſtian Religion, and conſequently to Reaſon, according to our own Account. But I anſwer, none of them can be prov'd from Scripture, and ſome of them are directly contrary to it. Our bleſſed Saviour *came eating and drinking*, was preſent at Weddings, Feaſts, and other Entertainments; nay, at one of them work'd a Miracle to make Wine, when it is plain there had been more drank than was abſolutely neceſſary for the ſupport of Nature; and conſequently ſomething had been indulg'd to Pleaſure, and Chearfulneſs. If it be a Crime to be rich; how comes St. *Paul* to give Precepts and Commands to rich Men as ſuch, without the leaſt Cenſure, or Reflection upon them for being ſo? *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor truſt in uncertain Riches, but in the living God,*

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who giveth us all Things richly to enjoy: [By the way it appears from hence, that we may *enjoy* theſe Things; conſequently this Sort of *Enjoyment* is not unlawful.] *That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate; laying up in Store for themſelves a good Foundation againſt the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life*: 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19. Nay this Text is a Proof of the contrary: For it ſeems a rich Man may be a good Man, be *rich in good Works*, go to Heaven, and *lay hold on eternal Life*. The ſame Apoſtle adviſes Chriſtians, even in Times of Perſecution, ſo to *uſe the World, as not to abuſe it*; 1 Cor. vii. 31. We may *uſe* it then: Which ſure no-body would do, (it would not be worth while) unleſs by *uſing* it he in ſome meaſure *enjoy'd* it. If no Books are to be read, but ſacred and divine ones, if no Heathen Authors particularly muſt be perus'd by Chriſtians, how happens it, that St. *Paul* was learned in the Wiſdom of the *Greeks* and *Romans*, (as *Moſes* was in That of the *Egyptians*) ſeveral times quotes the

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the Writings of the *Greek* Poets, and incorporates them into the Body of his own? We ought not, they ſay, to blame their Doctrines for being ſtrict: And we would not, if they were true. As the Caſe ſtands, we do not blame them only for being *ſtrict*, but for being *falſe*: We are for as much Strictneſs as Chriſtianity requires; which indeed is a great deal; and no more need be added: But we will never allow, that a Doctrine muſt be *eminently Chriſtian*, merely becauſe 'tis *ſtrict*; when at the ſame time we can prove, that it is *contrary to Chriſtianity*, as well as to *Reaſon*.

But Texts of Scripture are urg'd to prove theſe their Doctrines. Our Saviour declares, that *whoſoever forſakes not all that he has cannot be his Diſciple*. And the young rich Man in the Goſpel, tho' very well inclin'd, could not be a Chriſtian; becauſe he would not ſell his Eſtate, and give it to the Poor. But beſides that *forſaking all* may very well mean no more, than *being ready to do ſo*, whenever the Diſcharge of *our Duty* ſhall require it, (and This what Chriſtian denies?)

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will any one ſay, that the Caſe is the ſame with Chriſtians in all Ages, as it was in the Days of Chriſt, and his Apoſtles? Is not the Caſe quite alter'd? Every-body knows, that in thoſe Times, it was almoſt impoſſible for a Man to adhere to Chriſt, without hazarding the Loſs of his temporal Goods, and even of his Life? But is it ſo now? Our Saviour, it is further alledg'd, commands his Diſciples to *take no thought, what they ſhould eat, drink, or wear*: But the Words in the Original μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, * be not anxious, ſollicitous, or diſtracted, are far from excluding all Care, or Concern about theſe Things. In another Place, it is argued, he has theſe Words; *Labour not for the Meat that periſheth, but for that Meat which endureth unto everlaſting Life*, † i. e. according to the *Hebrew Idiom*, perpetually made uſe of by the Writers of the New Teſtament, not *ſo much* for the one as for the other. And the ſame may be ſaid of that other alledg'd Text, ‖ *Lay not up for yourſelves Treaſures on Earth*,

* *Matth.* vi. 25. † *Joh.* vi. 27.
‖ *Matth.* vi. 19, 20.

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Earth, but Treaſures in Heaven; i. e. be infinitely more careful for the latter, than the former. Thoſe Expreſſions of our bleſſed Lord, *Matth.* v. *turning one Cheek, when the other is ſmitten; giving the Cloak, when the Coat is demanded*, &c. *ſeeming* to forbid all repelling of Force and Violence, particularly Law-ſuits, are only *proverbial* and *hyperbolical* Phraſes, prohibiting Revenge, and a litigious Temper; commanding a patient Enduring of Injuries, in leſſer Matters, or when they are in any degree tolerable, according to the Dictates of ſober Reaſon, Prudence, and Equity. In the ſame Chapter, he *ſeems* at firſt View to forbid all Manner of *Swearing*: but the Context reſtraining it to common Converſation, would any one interpret it literally? Eſpecially ſince in other Places of Scripture ſome ſwearing is commanded; and the Apoſtles, the Angels, and God himſelf recommend it by their Examples? Every Body knows what wild Work we muſt make with the Scriptures, and indeed with all other Writings of any Depth and Difficulty; if we take *every Word* and

and *Expreſſion* in its *firſt*, *literal*, and moſt *rigorous Signification*, without attending to the main Driſt and Scope of the Writer, and explaining what is obſcure by what is eaſy and obvious. I only hint at theſe their Reaſonings from Scripture, to give a Specimen or Sample of them; not pretending to anſwer their Arguments at large; which indeed it is not worth while to do, they being not conſiderable enough to be formally and profeſſedly refuted.

The Truth is, all their Arguments both from Reaſon and Scripture are (as all Arguments ever muſt be that are contrary to Common Senſe) entirely fallacious, and inconcluſive; confounding the moſt diſtinct Ideas with one another; as the *Abuſe* of a Thing with the *Uſe* of it; *chiefly* with *only*; *dangerous* with *unlawful*, &c. In the Courſe of their Reaſonings *one* Thing is *miſtaken* for *another*. As, when it is propos'd to be prov'd, that it is unlawful to take Pleaſure in any of this World's Goods; the Arguments prove no more than the Unlawfulneſs of Luxury, which no-body denies.

They

They are likewiſe (as is uſual upon theſe Occaſions) inconſiſtent with themſelves, and run into manifeſt Self-contradictions. Thus one of theſe Writers, as I ſaid, poſitively aſſerts, that all Chriſtians, in all Ages, are obliged to ſell all they have, and give it to the Poor. But being aware, I ſuppoſe, of ſome Objections (as it would be ſtrange indeed if he ſhould not) he elſewhere ſays, that * "He ſufficient-"ly ſelleth all, who parteth with the "Self-enjoyment of it, and maketh it "the Support of thoſe that want it." To paſs by that odd Expreſſion *Self-enjoyment* of it; it ſeems then at laſt by *ſelling* all is meant, *not ſelling* all; but not enjoying any Thing, and ſupporting the Poor. Tho' this is a wonderful Way of explaining one's ſelf; I deny even this: And how is it prov'd that we muſt enjoy none of theſe Things? Why, by no Arguments, but ſuch as conclude only againſt Luxury, and Covetouſneſs; as I obſerv'd before.

Many

* LAW *of Chriſtian Perfection*, P. 115.

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Many Things indeed are intermixed with theſe ſingular Doctrines, which are true and of great Importance. This World is certainly very vain, and a mere nothing in compariſon of the World to come: It is as certainly our Duty to live above it, to be heavenly-minded, and to ſet our Affections upon things above, more than upon things on Earth. But does it from hence follow, that we muſt have nothing to do with the World, but, literally ſpeaking, live in it, as if we were not in it? Queſtionleſs, Self-denyal, Mortification, and taking up our Croſs, is neceſſary; and we ſhall be ſure to have Opportunities enough for it, by reſiſting our vicious Appetites, and patiently ſuffering Afflictions. I grant too, that ſome voluntary Suffering inflicted upon ourſelves, as Faſting, &c. is ordinarily very requiſite; and in ſome Caſes little leſs than neceſſary. But why muſt we allow ourſelves no Pleaſure in worldly Things? Is there no ſuch Thing as innocent Diverſion? Or will any body in his Wits ſay ſo? We ſhould uſe our Fleſh, as a good King would his Subjects, or a good Maſter

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Master his Servants; that is, keep it in due Subjection, not pamper it into Rebellion, or Disobedience; yet not be unnecessarily cruel to it, nor torment it for the sake of tormenting it. We must, it is no less true, renounce the Pomps and Vanities of the World: But how? *So as not to follow, or be led by them*; as our Church speaks; that is, not be enslav'd by them, or immoderately given up to them. But surely some Christians not only may, but must, admit of *Pomps*; otherwise, what would become of Sovereignty, and Magistracy? And all Christians must have to do with some *Vanities*; or else *they must needs go out of the World* indeed; for the World itself is all over *Vanity*. I grant too, that many who are thought good Christians are not (it is to be feared) truly such: This I not only grant, but insist upon. But why must so much Falshood be built upon so much Truth? Why must we be strain'd up to such a Pitch of Strictness, as is not only not requir'd *by* Christianity, but directly contrary to it?

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III. I proceed now, in the Third Place, to ſhew the *dangerous Tendency*, and *pernicious Conſequences* of being *righteous over-much*, and *over-wiſe*. *Why ſhouldeſt thou deſtroy thyſelf?* Here we muſt premiſe, that as there are ſeveral Sorts, and Degrees of being *righteous over-much*; they are not all equally vicious, nor equally dangerous, and deſtructive. In Some, it proceeds rather from Folly, and Weakneſs of Judgment, than from any more malignant Principle. In Some, it is attended with Pride, and Self-conceit; In Others not. In Some, 'tis well-meaning Weakneſs; in Others ill-meaning Hypocriſy: But in All, 'tis wrong and vicious; tho' not equally ſo. I ſay, vicious, as well as wrong, even in the beſt of them. For neither *Weakneſs of Judgment*, nor even a *good Intention* in the *Perſon*, can poſſibly alter the *Nature* of the *Thing*. All Deviations from Vertue are, and muſt be, in themſelves vicious; and the Tendency of them dangerous more, or leſs; whatever be the Principle of them; or with whatever other accidental Circumſtances they

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they are attended. This being premis'd, I proceed.

These Extraordinarys, and Excesses, do infinite Mischief to Religion, and the Souls of Men. The other Extreme indeed is so far more *pernicious*, as it is more *common*: But still This is pernicious too: And because it is not so much observ'd, or apprehended, as the other, it is upon that account, as well as others, carefully to be guarded against. It dejects and perplexes Persons truly and sincerely religious, making them think they do not their Duty, when they really do: On the other Hand, it hardens the wicked, and profane; making them explode the Christian Religion, as being impracticable, and by consequence irrational: Of which more presently. These *righteous over-much* therefore and *over-wise give great occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*: They *bring up an evil Report* upon the *true genuine Christianity*; as the Spies from the Camp of the *Israelites* did upon the *good Land* they were sent to search: Only with this Difference; They had seen, and were

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acquainted with the *good Land* which they misrepresented, and traduced; whereas These are not acquainted with the true Spirit, and Genius of Christianity. They even give Countenance and Encouragement (however undesignedly) to Those who are vicious in the other Extreme, to the Leud, and Debauch'd, the Irreligious, and Profane. So far are we from acting imprudently, or improperly, while we shew the Danger of this Extreme, at a Time when we see, and acknowledge that the other is so prevailing: Tho' let it be remember'd, by the way, that this, of which we are discoursing, is more than ordinarily prevailing too: And I say it gives Encouragement even to Those of the contrary Extreme. For when they see the *highest Professors* of Religion teaching such absurd Doctrines, and seconding them with such absurd Practices; they flatter themselves (tho' indeed very foolishly) that Religion itself is an absurd Thing, and that there is no Truth, or solid Reason in it: And so are harden'd, and confirmed in their Libertinism, and dissolute Course of

of Living, in their Profaneneſs, and Infidelity. *Why* therefore *ſhouldſt thou deſtroy thyſelf*, Thou *righteous over-much*, by deſtroying others, in caſting ſo much Scandal, and Reproach upon Religion?

But to come more cloſely and directly, to the Perſons themſelves. *Seeſt thou a Man wiſe in his own Conceit? There is more hope of a Fool, than of him*, ſays the wiſeſt of Men, the Author of my Text, in another Place, *Prov.* xxvi. 12. And we ſee that to be *wiſe in one's own conceit*, and *righteous over-much* are here join'd together. Alas! Generally ſpeaking a great Part of our Lives is ſpent, before we are wiſe enough to perceive that we are Fools; before we know enough to be ſenſible of our Ignorance. For the more we *truly* know, the more ſenſible we are how little we know: The Knowledge even of the moſt Learned being infinitely exceeded by their Ignorance: But then they *know That Ignorance*; which perhaps is the beſt Part of their Knowledge. True Wiſdom therefore is always modeſt, diffident, and hum-

ble:

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ble: But *real Ignorance* is apt to be confident, pragmatical, and presumptuous. 'Tis for this Reason that Those who run into the Follys of which we are speaking, are for the most Part *young* People; who are prone to be forward, and assuming: Whereas a considerable Portion of our Lives is spent, before we come to any maturity of Judgment; for to That *Experience* very much contributes. These more especially are apt to be *over-wise*, or *wise in their own conceits*: And what the wisest of Men says of such we have just now heard. To which *Reflection* of His in That Place, we may add his *Advice* in another; partly cited before. *Be not wise in thine own Eyes: Fear the Lord, and depart from Evil. Prov.* iii. 7. Plainly intimating that those who are *wise in their own conceit*, or *over-wise*, which is here join'd with being *righteous over-much*, have not the *true* Fear of God, and do not depart from Evil; however they may imagine themselves to be more wise, and righteous, than others. To which we may add That of the same

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ſame inſpired Writer in another Place, *Pride goeth before Deſtruction.* Prov. xvi. 18.

But perhaps it will be ſaid, that Thoſe, of whom we are ſpeaking, are ſo far from being proud, that they are the *pooreſt in Spirit*, the meekeſt, the moſt humble, and mortify'd of Mankind. But there is a mighty difference between Appearance and Reality: There is often the deepeſt Pride, where there is no high, or lofty Look; and the Height of Confidence and Self-ſufficiency, under the Guiſe and Semblance of the greateſt Modeſty. But how then ſhall we *diſtinguiſh*; ſince we know not the Hearts of Men? I anſwer, We certainly ought to judge charitably; and believe every Man to be what he *ſeems*, if he ſeems to be good; unleſs we have Proof and Evidence of the contrary. *By their Fruits* therefore *ye ſhall know them*; as our Saviour ſpeaks of Thoſe who *come in Sheep's Cloathing, but inwardly are ravening Wolves.* Matth. vii. 15, 16. A Phariſaical Oſtentation, and outward Show of Piety, *Praying,*

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ing, or Singing Pſalms *in the Corners of the Streets, to be ſeen of Men*, (Matth. vi. 5.) is one undoubted Sign of Pride, and That the worſt ſort of it, *Spiritual Pride*. Again; He is proud, who *exerciſes himſelf in great Matters which are too high for him*, Pſal. cxxxi. 1. who pretends to be more than ordinarily knowing in things which he knows nothing of; who peremptorily cenſures his Betters, and takes upon him to teach his Teachers. All which (to omit many other Inſtances) is contrary to the *Spirit* and Genius of the *Goſpel*, to the *Modeſty* and *Humility* of the *Chriſtian Religion*. Theſe, and ſuch like, Symptoms are certain Indications of Pride, and That the worſt Sort of it. Or if not Pride (for I deſire to judge as favourably and ſoftly as poſſible) 'tis a *Folly* that approaches very near to *Madneſs*; and the Conſequences of it are never the leſs pernicious to others, whatever is to be ſaid of the Perſons themſelves.

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But ſuppoſing this diſeaſe to be of the *worſt ſort*, it is one of the moſt dangerous that can be imagined; perhaps the rooſt dangerous of any. For beſides the conſideration of Pride, ſpiritual Pride, already taken Notice of; what is it but *calling Evil Good, and Good Evil; putting Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs; putting Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter?* Iſa. v. 20. *Exceſſes* and *Extremes*, which are always *Vices*, being extolled and recommended as the *Perfection* of *Virtue?* But the moſt dangerous Circumſtance is this; that ſuch perſons are of all the *moſt difficult to be reclaimed* from their Errors and Vices. Others, tho' very bad Men, and difficult enough to be reformed, are ſenſible however that they *are* bad Men; but with theſe 'tis quite the reverſe: In their own Imagination their Errors are the Height of Wiſdom, and their Sins and Vices the moſt perfect Vertues. They think themſelves the greateſt Saints, when in truth, and for that very Reaſon, the grand Enemy (as it is to be feared) has the faſteſt hold of them; they are *under ſtrong Deluſion, in the Gall of Bitterneſs, and in the Bond of Iniquity.* They may indeed (and God grant they may) be convinced, and forſake the

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Error of their Ways; nay, by his Grace they certainly will; if laying aſide Prejudice, they liſten to the ſober Dictates of right Reaſon, and ſound Religion.

Farther; as to be thus *righteous overmuch* is in *itſelf* very *dangerous* and pernicious; ſo there is great *danger* of People's *falling into it*, tho' the other Extreme be more common; yet this (as I hinted before) is common likewiſe. To run from one Extreme to another, or at leaſt to be in one Extreme, or other, is the weak Side of human Nature. And this on the exceſſive part is the more *fallacious* of the two: becauſe the other is plain and obvious to every body; but here Vice has the *Appearance*, and even the *Name* of Vertue; which there it has not. *Drunkenneſs*, or any other *Intemperance*, for Example, can never paſs for a Vertue; but *fooliſh exceſſive Abſtinence may*.

Then for the *ſpreading*, propagating, and diffuſing of theſe extraordinary novel Doctrines and Practices; there is great Danger of that alſo. The Generality, the main Bulk of the People, are injudicious, and eaſy to be impoſed upon. They are wonderfully ſtruck with every Thing that is *new* and *unuſual*, (another Weakneſs of human Nature) never

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never considering, that Truth is the oldest Thing in the World; and that in Religion and Morality whatever is *really* new, is certainly false. To gratify their itch of Curiosity, they run in Multitudes after these extra-regular Novelists; not thinking of the Danger they incur by so doing. In Truth, there is scarce any Thing, among all the *Phænomena*, or Appearances of Nature, more astonishing and unaccountable than popular *Error* and *Delusion*; *one Fool* (as the common Saying is) *making many:* much indeed might be said in the speculative Way, to give some Account of it: But I have not Time, nor is it my Business at present; it being rather Matter of Philosophy, than Divinity; of Curiosity, than Edification. Thus much only in general: It proceeds from great Weakness, and want of Judgment; from the universal Depravation and Corruption of human Nature, by the Fall of Man; as does all Folly, Error, Sin, and Misery: But then let it be ever remember'd, that God has provided, and put into our Hands, a Remedy for all this; that is right Reason and holy Scripture: which if we do not make use of, it is our own Fault, and we must severely answer for it at the Day of Judgment.

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Add to this, that the great Enemy of Souls adapts his Temptations to *all ſorts of Tempers* and Diſpoſitions. Thoſe who are inclined to be profane and debauch'd, we need not ſay how eaſily he prevails upon. But as for thoſe who are diſpoſed to be good and virtuous; if he cannot prevail with them to be *vicious, commonly ſo call'd*, he labours to make them *over-virtuous*, that is, *vicious*, tho' *not commonly* ſo called: And ſo involves them in the Dangers and Miſchiefs of which we are ſpeaking.

Some more of which, not yet taken Notice of, are theſe following. The two great Hindrances of Salvation are *Preſumption* in the one Extreme, and *Deſperation* in the other. Now this *over-much Righteouſneſs*, or *Righteouſneſs falſely ſo called*, is apt to produce both theſe; Preſumption in ſome, Deſpair in others. For a Man to conceit himſelf tranſcendently virtuous and holy, when he is not ſo at all; to think himſelf *certain* of *Salvation*, when he is in great *Danger* of *Damnation*, is manifeſtly the higheſt Preſumption imaginable. Another, on the contrary, being perſuaded that it is his Duty to do thoſe extraordinary Works above ſpecified, with many ſuch like; and finding that he neither

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does, nor is able to do them, is tempted to *deſpair* of his Salvation, as ſome of late, we are told, have actually done. They have been made *ſtark mad*, and received into *Bedlam*, as ſuch. And was the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt, that *reaſonable Service* *, as St. *Paul* ſtyles it, intended to make People mad? Is this for the Honour of Chriſtianity? Others, we are told, by immoderate Abſtinence, have ſtarv'd themſelves to Death. To theſe the Words of my Text are applicable in the ſtricteſt Senſe, *Be not righteous over-much; why ſhouldſt thou* DESTROY THYSELF.

Theſe Miſchiefs done of late, and in ſo ſhort a Time, by ſuch Doctrines and Teachers, are ſufficiently known to the World. They have ſet the neareſt and deareſt Relations at variance; diſturb'd the Quiet of Families; nay, thrown whole Neighbourhoods and Pariſhes into Confuſion.

The *Church* itſelf, as a regular, well-order'd *Society*, is by theſe irregular upſtart *Societies*, even by the *beſt* of them, and much more by the *worſt*, greatly weaken'd and impair'd. By theſe *Extraordinaries* they take off from the Re-

* Rom. xii. 1.

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verence due to the *ordinary* ſtanding Rules and Laws of the Church. For tho' they do conſtantly attend divine Service, as preſcribed in the public Offices; yet I appeal to all *diſcerning* and *judicious* Perſons, whether, *in the Nature of Things*, they are not likely to ſet a greater Value upon *their own particular Meetings* and *Exerciſes*, ſet up purely by their own Fancies, and commanded by no Authority of God, or Man. To be plain; If what I am inform'd of theſe Meetings be true, they are Schiſmatical, in their *Tendency* at leaſt, tho' not ſo deſign'd: For there may be a Schiſm *in* the Church, as well as a Schiſm *from* it. If it be true, that they conſiſt of conſiderable Numbers, that they have Prayers (ſome too extemporary ones) and Preaching, or ſomething like it; I do not ſee how they can be deem'd Legal Aſſemblies. The publick Meetings of Proteſtant Diſſenters from the Church are tolerated by Law, and licens'd by Authority; but I never heard that theſe are either: if they ſhould be, I doubt there would be more Danger *to* the Church from a kind of Half-Diſſenters *in* it, than from thoſe who are total Diſſenters *from* it. Now that the weakening of our pure, primitive, Apoſtolical

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cal Church, as a Society, muſt needs weaken the inward *Power of Godlineſs*, is evident; becauſe the Ordinances of the Church are the Outworks and Fortifications of inward Chriſtian Piety and Vertue.

But there is *one Miſchief* of being *righteous over-much*, which I have reſerved for the *laſt*, to be more *largely* and *particularly* conſidered: Which is this, that it *tends* at leaſt to that baneful Plague ENTHUSIASM. It is itſelf ſomewhat *Enthuſiaſtical* at beſt; and *tends*, as I ſaid, to *downright Enthuſiaſm*. I do not ſay, that all *Righteous over-much* are *Enthuſiaſts*; but I *do* ſay, that in all Ages *Enthuſiaſts* have been *righteous over-much*; they *began* with the *laſt-mention'd*, and *ended* with the *other*. And is it not ſo in theſe Times? To what a Height of *Fanatick Madneſs* in *Doctrine*, as well as *Practice*, are ſome advanced, who ſet out at firſt with an Appearance of *more than ordinary Sanctity* in *Practice* only?

By *Enthuſiaſm* is meant a Perſon's having a ſtrong, but falſe Perſuaſion, that he is *divinely inſpired*; or at leaſt, that he has *the Spirit* of God *ſome* way or *other*; and This made known to him in a *particular* and *extraordinary* Manner. Whether our modern *Righteous over-much* do

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do *as yet* pretend to a *Spirit of Prophecy*, I cannot ſay: I hear, however, they talk of Dreams, Viſions, and *Revelations*. Be that as it will, we now ſee their *Actions*: and I argue thus. Either they think themſelves inſpired, or they do not. If they *do*, they are Enthuſiaſts; becauſe that Perſuaſion of their being inſpired is ſupported by *no Evidence*, and conſequently *falſe*: For to thoſe who were really inſpired by God, of old, He always gave *Evidence*, and *Proof* that they were ſo; and always muſt; becauſe otherwiſe the Inſpiration is of no Uſe. If they do *not*, they are *mad another way*; ſuppoſing themſelves, without extraordinary Aſſiſtance from God, to be capable of performing Things, which, without ſuch Aſſiſtance, 'tis impoſſible they ſhould perform: That Perſons wholly unlearned, for Inſtance, or very little learned, whether Laic or Eccleſiaſtic, ſhould by their own mere Abilities interpret, or expound difficult Places of Scripture, which cannot be done, without very great Learning. Take it which way you will, they are either *mad* in *Enthuſiaſm*, or *mad* in *Ignorance*, *Pride* and *Confidence*: Pride and Confidence, ſhocking and prodigious, not only in a *Chriſtian*, but in a *Human Creature*.

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But to return to *certain* Enthuſiaſm; Since thoſe of whom we are ſpeaking pretend, if not to direct divine *Revelation*, and *Prophecy*, yet to ſome *extraordinary Motions*, and *Impulſes* of the *Spirit*: I aſk them, What *Proof* have they of ſuch Motions or Impulſes? Why, they ſay, they have the *ſtrongeſt Perſuaſion* of them. And I ſay, there is *ſtrong Deluſion*, as well as *ſtrong Perſuaſion*; and the *latter* is moſt certainly the *former*, if there be no *Evidence* to prove it otherwiſe. O! but they are *ſure* of it; they *ſee* it; they *feel* it: And do we want *Reaſons* and *Arguments* to convince us, that the Sun ſhines at Noon-day? or that we feel any outward Impreſſions made upon our Bodies? I anſwer; This is arguing from a mere *Metaphor*; which was never yet allowed to be good Arguing. Do they then *ſee* the Light of the *Spirit* within them, in as *ſtrict*, *proper*, and *literal* a Senſe, as we *ſee* the Light of the *Sun*? Or *feel* his Impulſes *juſt in the ſame manner* as by *natural Senſation* we *feel* Pleaſure, or Pain, or any other Impreſſions made upon our Bodys? If they reply they *do*, 'tis *perfect Phrenzy*: All the World *knows* it to be *falſe*; and thoſe, who *talk* at *this Rate*, are not fit to be *talk'd with* at all. If

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they ſay they do *not*, we are come back to the *ſtrong certain Perſuaſion* aforeſaid. For nothing elſe is meant by this *Seeing*, and this *Feeling*: And to that *Perſuaſion* we have ſpoken already. In ſhort, their Argument ſtands Thus: It *is* ſo, BECAUSE it is ſo; and they are *ſure*, BECAUSE they are ſure: And what an Argument that is, let any one in his Senſes judge.

However, *ſure they are*, it ſeems: At ſuch a Place and Time exactly, they felt the Spirit ruſh upon them; and ſo can give a ready Anſwer to that old Fanatic Queſtion: When and where, at what Place, at what Time, on what Day of the Month, at what Hour of the Day, did the Spirit come pouring upon you with irreſiſtible Force, and ſeize you as his own? This, I ſay, is nothing but a Revival of the old Fanaticiſm in the laſt Century; when all manner of Madneſs was practis'd, and all manner of Villainy committed *in the Name of the Lord*, as thoſe profane Hypocrites, or Enthuſiaſts, or both, at that time expreſs'd themſelves. But what do they mean by *having the Spirit?* Being *born again of him*, or, in other Words, being *regenerate?* If ſo; I aſk, have we not the *new Birth*, and, in this Senſe, the

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the *Spirit*; if we have a ſtedfaſt Faith in God and Jeſus Chriſt, a Faith lively, and productive of Good Works; if we heartily repent of all our Sins, and effectually reform them; if our Conſciences, in the main, condemn us not, but acquit and applaud us? They anſwer, it ſeems, that all this is nothing, unleſs we *ſee*, *feel*, or *hear ſomething* within us. Being aſk'd what that *ſomething* is, they reply; They *only perceive* it, but cannot *explain* it. This now (if any thing more be meant by it, as they plainly do mean ſomething more, tho' they know not what, than a *good Conſcience*, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghoſt conſequent upon it, which who denies?) is perfect Enthuſiaſm and Phrenzy in Religion. 'Tis dethroning the higher Power of the Soul, *Judgment*; and ſetting up the lower Faculty, *Fancy*, or *Imagination*, in its room. And when that *grand Deceiver*, the *Devil*, has the Scene of *Fancy* or *Imagination* left clear to himſelf, to act his Illuſions and Impoſtures upon, it is eaſy to judge what *dreadful Conſequences* are like to follow. That there is ſuch a thing as the Operation and Influence of the Holy Spirit upon our Souls (for what elſe is *God's Grace*, without which we

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can do no good thing?) tho' we cannot diſtinguiſh it from the Operations of our own Minds, is not only granted, but inſiſted upon, by all ſincere and judicious Chriſtians. But what Reaſon, what Scripture, is there for this *inward Seeing, Feeling*, and *Hearing?* Read, by all means (I earneſtly recommend it) the excellent Biſhop *Bull*'s incomparable Diſcourſe *Concerning the Spirit of God in the Faithful; how and in what manner it doth bear Witneſs with their Spirits, that they are the Children of God; and what Degree of Hope or Perſuaſion concerning their Adoption this Witneſs of the Spirit doth ordinarily produce in the Faithful*; upon this Text of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* viii. ver. 16. *The Spirit beareth Witneſs with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.* It is the Third Diſcourſe in his Third Volume. Read it, I ſay, over and over; and digeſt it thoroughly in your Thoughts. I might in truth ſay the ſame of all his admirable Diſcourſes. There you will ſee difficult Scriptures *really* interpreted and expounded; there you will ſee the Difference between true Doctrine and falſe, between *ſound Divinity* and *Enthuſiaſm*; between the deepeſt, yet cleareſt Learning, join'd with the greateſt Humility, on the one hand,

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and ignorant, illiterate Pride and Confidence on the other.

The *Doctrines* they *graft* upon this wild Perſuaſion of their *having* and *feeling the Spirit*, are (like the Perſuaſion itſelf) *falſe* and *pernicious*. Such as theſe: No Man can be in a State of Salvation, without being *ſure* of it; and on the other hand, if he be *ſure* of it, he is certainly *in* it: Meaning by the Word *ſure*, moſt ſtrongly and thoroughly perſuaded. This, I ſay, is both *falſe*, and *pernicious*. *Falſe*; Becauſe it makes the *Reality* of *Things* depend upon *our Perſuaſion* concerning them; than which nothing can be more ſenſeleſs and abſurd: On the contrary, our *Perſuaſion*, if true, muſt be founded upon the *Truth* and *Reality of Things*. *Pernicious*; Becauſe here again we have *Deſpair* on the one hand, *Preſumption* on the other. The former Part of this Doctrine tends to plunge into Deſpair Thoſe who, whether *with*, or *without* Reaſon, have *not* this ſtrong Perſuaſion of their being in a State of Salvation; and the latter to confirm in the Height of Preſumption Thoſe who, without Reaſon, *have* it. The real Truth of the Matter is this. It is one thing to be *certainly in* a good State; and quite another thing

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to be *certain of* it: Tho' between those two very *different* things these false Spiritualists seem to make no *Distinction*. A Man may *be* in a State of Salvation, and yet by reason of Melancholy, Weakness of Judgment, or even Modesty and Humility, think he is *not*: On the contrary, he may be in a *very bad* way, and yet by reason of a sanguine Temper, Presumption, Pride, or Enthusiasm, conceit himself to be in a *very good* one. These People therefore may have the strongest Persuasion of their being in the sure Way to Heaven, and yet be far from it; nay *the farther*, upon the Account of that *very Persuasion*. And others may be, *certainly*, in the number of those who shall be saved, yet be *doubtful* concerning it, nay verily persuaded of the contrary. What *Proof* again have these Men for their confident Assertions? Why none at all; but, just as before, they are *sure*. But I ask once more, *Why* are they sure? Upon what *Grounds*, what *Evidence*? There it all turns; that is the only Question to the Purpose: If That be not well answered, all the rest is empty and insignificant. And yet, upon this groundless Confidence, how do they flatter and delude *themselves*; how judge and condemn *others*!

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Do you *feel* the Spirit within you? Are you *feelingly sure* of your Salvation? The Answer being given in the Negative, as it well may, and yet those who give it be very safe, the immediate Reply is, THEN YOU ARE DAMN'D. Who can hear this without Horror and Detestation? Who can bear the audacious Presumption and Uncharitableness of these Wretches; thus, like *Solomon*'s Mad-man, *Prov.* xxvi. 18. *casting their Firebrands, Arrows, and Death*; and *sending to Hell* (only because they are not of *their own frantick Persuasion)* millions of Christians *much better than themselves?*

I have still something to add concerning their pretended *Assurance*, or *Certainty* of their *having the Spirit.* This false Assurance may (and I hear does) produce very mischievous Effects, *different from*, and even *contrary to* each other; according to the *different Tempers* of different Persons. Some argue, that since they have *received the Holy Ghost*, every Sin they afterwards commit is a *Sin against the Holy Ghost*, and therefore *unpardonable:* So they are driven to *Desperation* and *Madness* on that Side. Others, on the contrary, may imagine, as some have actually done, that since they have the *Holy Ghost*, they

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they *cannot sin at all*; at least not so far as to miss of Salvation: Either the *grossest Immoralities*, as Fornication and Adultery, are *in* THEM *no Sins*: Or, if they are; yet, *having once the Spirit*, being *once* regenerate, and born again, they cannot FINALLY *fall away from Grace*, nor cease to be the Children of God. This is reviving the old, exploded, and so often solidly confuted Doctrine of *absolute certain Perseverance*, in the *Regenerate*: A Doctrine which, I verily believe, has contributed more to the Ruin of Souls, than any other that can be well imagined. For 1st, How does it *appear* that they *are* regenerate? Their *strong Persuasion* without Proof will never prove it; as we have often had occasion to observe. But 2dly, Supposing them to be so; the Doctrine of *absolute certain* Perseverance even in the truly Regenerate is *false* again in itself, and *pernicious* in its Consequences.

1st *False*. *Thou standest by Faith*, says the Apostle; *be not high-minded, but fear*. Rom. xi. 20. Why should he fear, if he stands, and is sure not to fall? I know this Passage is thought by many to relate not to particular Persons with regard to their eternal Salvation, but to whole Nations converted from Heathenism,

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theniſm, as compared with the People of the Jews, in reſpect of its once peculiar temporal Privileges: And indeed I am of the ſame Opinion myſelf. However, ſince thoſe who aſſert abſolute indefectible Perſeverance in *particular Perſons* interpret St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe of *Predeſtinating*, *Chooſing*, *Rejecting*, *Standing* and *Falling*, as relating to *particular Perſons*, and their *ſpiritual State*; the Argument will hold *ad hominem*, according to their Expoſition; and I ſee not how they can evade it. In another place the ſame Apoſtle has theſe words: *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* 1 Cor. x. 12. Now either he *really* ſtands, as well as *thinks* he does; or *only* thinks he ſtands, but *really* does not: If the *latter*, nothing need be ſaid to it: He is *miſtaken* even in *thinking* he ſtands, or is *regenerate*; and ſo can juſtly deduce nothing from this Doctrine of abſolute Perſeverance, ſuppoſing it to be true. If the former; if he *really* ſtands, as well as thinks he does; yet it ſeems he *may* fall; otherwiſe, why ſhould he *take Heed* leſt he *ſhould* fall? St. *Peter* thus admoniſhes thoſe to whom he writes: *Give Diligence to make your Calling and Election ſure.* 2 Pet. i. 10.

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Whatever be meant by *Calling* and *Election*, *Diligence*, it ſeems, muſt be employed to make it *ſure*; therefore it is not ſure *of itſelf*. St. *Paul* adviſes all in general, the moſt regenerate not excepted, to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. Phil. ii. 12. What Occaſion for *Fear* and *Trembling*, or even for *working*, if their Salvation be *ſure* already? *The Juſt ſhall live by Faith*. Heb. x. 38. *And if he draw back, my Soul ſhall have no Pleaſure in him*. The *Juſt* then, he *who lives by Faith* (that is, ſure the *truly Regenerate*) may *draw back*; ſo draw back, that God's *Soul ſhall have no Pleaſure in* him: And if ſo, certainly he falls, and periſhes everlaſtingly. I cite the Paſſage exactly according to the Truth of the Original: For thoſe Words [*any Man*] are added in our *Engliſh* Verſion, without the leaſt Shadow of Reaſon or Authority. It would be endleſs to produce all the Texts to the ſame Purpoſe. It appears from the whole Tenor of the Goſpel, that the Chriſtian Life is a militant State, a State of Warfare; therefore of Danger more or leſs; and that (ordinarily ſpeaking at leaſt) we cannot be *ſure* of Heaven,

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Heaven, 'till we are *in* it, or juſt *entering into* it.

The Defenders of this Doctrine indeed alledge Texts of Scripture to juſtify it: But their Arguments from them have been long ſince abundantly anſwered by our learned Divines. I will produce one or two of them, for a Specimen or Sample only. Our Saviour ſpeaking of *Falſe Chriſts* ſays, they *ſhall ſhew Signs and Wonders; inſomuch that, if it were poſſible, they ſhall deceive the very Elect*, Matth. xxiv. 24. From whence it is inferred, that the Elect cannot poſſibly be *deceived*, and conſequently not *fall away*. But 1ſt, Who *are* the Elect? If by that Word be meant thoſe who are by God choſen to Salvation, yet is every one ſo, that *fancies* himſelf ſo? But in Truth, the Word *Elect*, both in Scripture, and the Writings of the primitive Fathers, means no more than *Chriſtians*, as diſtinguiſhed from Jews and * Heathens. 2dly, If the Perſons here meant could not be *deceived* by *falſe Miracles*, yet they might finally *fall away* by *ſomething elſe*. 3dly, The

* See *Whitby* on *Mark* xiii. 20. and other Commentators.

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Words εἰ δυνατὸν, *if poſſible*, may very well relate to thoſe who ſhall *endeavour to deceive*, and may be rendered thus; They ſhall *do all they poſſibly can to deceive* thoſe there mentioned; which does not imply that thoſe Perſons cannot *poſſibly be deceived*. They argue farther from 1 *John* iii. 9. *Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit Sin, for his Seed remaineth in him; and he cannot commit Sin, becauſe he is born of God.* But why muſt this prove, that he who is really *born of God* cannot *finally fall away?* Why may it not as well (or rather much better, eſpecially ſince ſo many other Texts of Scripture aſſert the contrary Doctrine) be no more than an *Explanation* of the *new Birth*; declaring *wherein it conſiſts*; at leaſt what is the certain *Proof* or *Evidence* of it. To be *born of God* is not to commit Sin, *i. e. great* and *grievous* Sin (for *in many things we offend all.* James iii. 2.) And he who is ſo, does not, and cannot commit it, *while* he is ſo: Becauſe, while he is ſo, his Seed (*i. e.* the *Grace*, or *word* of God) *remaineth in him.* But does it therefore follow, that he cannot *loſe* it, when ſo many plain Scriptures aſſure us that he

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may? The fewer and obſcurer Texts certainly ought to be interpreted by the greater Number, and the more plain and eaſy. But were Scripture ſilent in this matter, does not our own Reaſon tell us, that, with reſpect to the Health of his *Soul*, as well as of his *Body*, a Man may be in a *good State* at one time, and in a *bad one* at another? that the Grace of God may be *abuſed*? and that upon ſuch Abuſe it may be *withdrawn*? What can be more obvious and rational than this?

That the Doctrine we have been examining, if it be *falſe*, as I have ſhewn it to be, *muſt* be *pernicious*, is plain of itſelf: For he who is *firmly perſuaded* that he is *abſolutely ſafe*, when he is in *great Danger*, muſt needs be in the *more Danger* upon the account of that *very Perſuaſion*. We ſurely want no Arguments to prove, that *Security* in a State of *War* and *Peril* is of moſt *deſtructive* Conſequence.

The Truth is, theſe *extraordinary Spiritualiſts*, notwithſtanding their *high Profeſſions*, have in all Ages propagated *Doctrines* deſtructive of a *holy Life*: And their *Practices* too, notwithſtanding their Pretences to the greateſt Rigour,

gour, Strictneſs, and Severity, at their firſt ſetting out, have at laſt been groſly and ſcandalouſly *immoral.* Nor is this at all ſtrange: When once Men have forſaken the *via regia,* the King's Highway to Heaven, as plainly marked out in Holy Scripture; deſerted the ſtanding Rules and Orders of an excellently conſtituted Church, as ours is, and ran into ſuch wild Vagaries, as have been often ſeen, and now *are* ſeen, God only knows where they will ſtop: They may be ſo far given up to the *Spirit of Deluſion,* as to run into the greateſt *Exceſs of Riot.* The *Montaniſts* of old, and the *German Anabaptiſts,* about 240 Years ſince, are Inſtances of this; to omit others, both ancient and modern. It appears from Hiſtory and Experience, that the Gradation has been uſually this: *Righteous over-much* in *Practice* —— *Righteous over-much* in *Practice* and *Doctrine* —— *Immoral* and *Profligate* in *Both:* And this *ſtill* with a *Continuation* of the Pretences to an extraordinary Meaſure of the *Holy Spirit.* It is evident from that of the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* iii. 2, 3, 4, 5. That the *worſt of Men* may have *a Form of Godlineſs:* He is by

by very learned Writers ſuppoſed to reflect particularly upon that filthy Sect the *Gnoſticks*, who wallowed in all manner of Vice and Wickedneſs, and even taught for Doctrines the moſt deteſtable Impurities. Whether St. *Paul* in that Place means *Them* or no, certain it is, the Founder of their Sect, *Simon Magus*, was a moſt leud Wretch both in Practice and Doctrine; and yet was called the *great Power of God*. Our preſent Pretenders to Saintſhip have among them (it is notorious) Women of a moſt infamous and proſtitute Character: And they ſay, it ſeems, that by joining with *Them*, from being great Sinners they become Saints; all being ſuch who are of their Way, and all others Reprobate. This is generally the confident and unchriſtian Aſſertion of Seducers and falſe Teachers; as of the *Novatians* and *Donatiſts* of old, of the Papiſts now; and of moſt Hereticks, Schiſmaticks, and Enthuſiaſts, both ancient and modern. It is *commonly reported*, that Thoſe, with whom we have now to do, maintain other Tenets utterly deſtructive of Chriſtian Piety. I do not affirm this, becauſe I cannot ſtrictly prove it: But I have heard

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heard it affirmed by many. This I am sure of, it is *likely* to be true; because, since they are Revivers of *Antinomianism*, in the Doctrines I have above considered, it is highly probable they are so in others, tho' perhaps not in all. And of the *Antinomian* System in the main take the short Account which follows. "They were "so called for rejecting the Law as "of no Use under the Gospel. They "say that good Works do not further, "nor evil Works hinder Salvation: That "the Child of God cannot sin; that "God never chastiseth them, nor pu-"nisheth any Land for its Sin: That "Murder, Adultery, Drunkenness, *&c.* "are Sins in the Wicked, but not in "them: That the Child of Grace, be-"ing once assured of Salvation, never "doubteth afterwards: That no Man "should be troubled in Conscience for "Sin: That no Christian should be "exhorted to perform the Duties of "Christianity: That an Hypocrite may "have all the Graces that were in "*Adam* before the *Fall:* That Christ "is the only Subject of all Grace: "That no Christian believeth, or work-"eth any good, but Christ only be-

"lieveth

" lieveth and worketh; that God doth " not love any Man for his Holineſs; " that Sanctification is no Evidence of " Juſtification, &c *.

I have not Time ſo much as to mention many other Particulars which occur to my Thoughts: But one more, not yet mentioned, muſt by no means be entirely omitted. We have heard of *Field-Conventicles* in *Scotland* among the Enthuſiaſts of that Country: which yet, I think, were *there* always *ſuppreſſed* by the *Authority* of *Church*, or *State*, or *both*. We have in former Times had ſomething of this Nature in *England*, as practiſed by Brownifts, Anabaptiſts, Quakers, Ranters, or ſuch like. But for a *Clergyman of the Church of England* to *pray*, and *preach in the Fields*, in the Country, or in *the Streets* in the City, is *perfectly new*, never heard of before; a *freſh Honour* to the *bleſſed Age*, in which *We* have the Happineſs to live. To pray, preach, and ſing Pſalms, in the Streets and Fields, is worſe, if poſſible, than *intruding into Pulpits* by

* *Collier's* Dictionary; under the Article *Antinomians*. See alſo Bp. *Bull's* Sermons, Vol. I. p. 12, 13, 14, 15.

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downright *Violence*, and *Breach of the Peace*; and then *denying* the plain Fact with the most *infamous Prevarication**. I could say much here; but am quite *ashamed* to speak upon a Subject, which is a *Shame* and *Reproach*, not only to our *Church* and *Country*, but to *human Nature* itself. I will only add some short Queries: Can it promote the Christian Religion, to turn it into Riot, Tumult, and Confusion? To make it ridiculous and contemptible, and expose it to the Scorn and Scoffs of Infidels and Atheists? St. *Paul* commands that *all Things* (in the Publick Service and Worship of God) *be done decently, and in order*. Is this decent and orderly? If it be alledged (as I think it is) that Christ, and his Apostles, prayed and preached in the Fields, on Mountains, on the Sea-Shore, &c. I ask, have these Creatures the same Spirit and Power that they had? They *seem* to say they have indeed: But if they *directly say so*, do they not *blaspheme?* Do they *work Miracles*, as our Saviour and his Apostles did? Or give the *least Proof* of the Spi-

* See the *Weekly Miscellany* concerning the forcible Intrusion into the Pulpit at St. *Margaret's, Westminster.*

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rit they pretend to? Is Chriſtianity now in its Infancy, as it was then? Was the Church then eſtabliſhed, as it is now? Are we now to be converted to Chriſtianity from Judaiſm or Heatheniſm, as People were in thoſe Days? Or if we were; are ſuch falſe and ſpurious Apoſtles as theſe able to convert us? I might here very properly urge the *Canons* * of the Church of *England*; and (if I miſtake not) the *Laws* of the *Civil State*. But the Thing, tho' deteſtable, and of moſt pernicious Tendency, is, in another View, too contemptible to be longer inſiſted upon. It would likewiſe be endleſs, as well as nauſeous, to make Reflections, tho' never ſo juſt, upon that Rhapſody of Madneſs, Spiritual Pride, and little leſs than Blaſphemy, if not quite ſo; which this *Field-Preacher* calls his *Journal:* And ſo I ſay no more of it; but ſhall conclude all with ſome *Obſervations* upon *others*, and ſome *Application* to *ourſelves*. As to the former; let it be obſerved,

1ſt, That this Error of being *righteous overmuch* (like other Errors) proceeds from conſidering only *one Side of*

* See Canon LXXII and LXXIII.

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Things; and not taking in the *whole Compaſs* of an Argument or Subject. Did we *duly reflect* upon *both* Extremes, we ſhould *never fall* into *either* of them. What! ſays the *Half-Thinker*, is not *Charity to the Poor* a moſt excellent thing? And can I be *too* charitable? Can I therefore beſtow *too much* upon the Poor? I anſwer; Would you conſider the other ſide, you would perceive, that tho' you cannot be too charitable, yet you may beſtow too much upon the Poor, to the Ruin of your Wife and Children; which is not *Charity*, but *Madneſs*, and a great and *moſt grievous Sin*. Did you never hear of that common and very true (tho' often indeed miſapply'd) Saying, *Charity begins at Home?* Or, to urge a much better Authority than a vulgar Proverb; Did you never read that of St. *Paul*, 1 Tim. v. 8. *If any provide not for his own, and ſpecially thoſe of his own Houſe; he hath deny'd the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel?* The ſame Half-Thinker proceeds: Can I *pray* too much, when the Apoſtle ſays *Pray without ceaſing?* I anſwer, Yes, you may: For the ſame God who gave us *Scripture*, gave us *common Senſe*: Which tells us that thoſe Words can mean

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mean no more, than being *always* in an *habitual State* of praying, and *actually* praying both in publick and private, *frequently* and *constantly*, not spending *all our Time* in it, no nor the greatest Part of it, nor any Thing like it: Because, if we should, we could not do the Business of our *ordinary Callings*, nor perform many other even *Christian Duties* (*strictly* such) which our Religion as much requires of us, as Prayer itself. And so of the rest.

2*dly*. It is to be observed, that a great Part of what has been said in this Discourse is applicable not only to our *new Enthusiasts*, but to those of *longer Standing*; as the *Quakers* (one of the most pestilent Sects that ever infested the *Christian* Church) the *Anabaptists*, many of whom, among the ignorant Country People at least, are perfect *Enthusiasts*; and, perhaps, some others. All their Doctrine turns upon strange unaccountable Notions about the *Spirit* and *inward Lights*; by which they know not what they mean, and which they confidently *assert* without any Sort of Proof. The *Quakers*, in particular, tell us that the *Light within them* admits of *no Proof*, because it is *self-evident* as a *first Principle*, that

that is, they are *ſure, becauſe they are ſure*; they *ſee*, and *feel*, and *hear inwardly*; the Folly and Infatuation of which I think I have ſufficiently, tho' briefly, expoſed.

3*dly*. Obſerve the ſtrange *Inconſiſtency* and *Self-Contradiction* of theſe *Enthuſiaſts*. They pretend to extraordinary *Strictneſs* in *Practice*; yet teach *Doctrines* utterly ſubverſive of *common Morality*. I have proved this; and therefore may be allow'd to *affirm* it. However, they talk much of the *Comforts* they feel *within* them; the Preſence of God *with* them; their *Enlargements* in Devotion; and ſuch like. But may not all this, which they imagine to be the *Illapſe* of the *beſt Spirit*, be really the *Deluſion* of the *worſt*? Nay, is it not *certainly* ſo, if their Doctrines and Practices are *contrary to the Goſpel*, as I have ſhewn them to be? Whatever may be thought by ſome of the *Quakers* in particular; Thoſe who are well acquainted with theſe Matters are, I believe, pretty well ſatisfy'd, that, tho' they *began* with being *righteous over-much*, and acted in a wild Manner under Pretence of extraordinary Sanctity; yet they are *at preſent* not overladen with Religi-

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on, not altogether ſpiritual; but have at leaſt very near as much Regard for *this* World, as for the *next*. As to our *new Enthuſiaſts*; if they go on in their Way, we may expect in a ſhort Time to hear them revive the old profane ridiculous Jargon of being *Godded with God*, and *Chriſted with Chriſt*; of *Indwellings, Outgoings*, being *carried out in Duty* (ſuch was the *Cant* in thoſe Times, now, belike, 'tis *Enlargements*) of *reſting, lying, rolling upon Chriſt*; with many other uncouth Phraſes; which muſt needs be diſguſtful to every ſober Chriſtian.

4*thly*. It is very obſervable that the *Righteous overmuch*, the *Enthuſiaſts* and *falſe Spiritualiſts* have, in all Ages, *hated the eſtabliſh'd Church* and *Clergy*; of late Years, and here in *England*, particularly: Which I think is much to the Honour of the Church and Clergy. They may apply to themſelves with Regard to God and Religion, what *Cicero* ſaid of himſelf with Regard to the Common-Wealth of *Rome*; That all who are Enemies to *God* and *Religion* are Enemies to *them* likewiſe. What envenomed Arrows have been ſhot againſt us by the Lewd and Debauch'd, the Ungodly and Profane, the *Infidels* and *Atheiſts*, is ſufficiently known;

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known: And it is as well known that the Pretenders to extraordinary Holiness, false Prophets and *Enthusiasts* of all Kinds, have given abundant Proof of their *Ill-will* to *us*, *and our Sion*. To pass over the inveterate Malice of the *Quakers*; the *pretended Prophets* about thirty Years ago, in their Effusions of blasphemous Nonsense, which they call'd *Warnings*, utter'd the most virulent Invectives against the Clergy in general: Our *present Enthusiasts*, it is said, do the same; and none more, than those who are *Clergymen themselves*. What *Sort of Clergymen*, or even *Men* they are, let the World judge. The Reason why all the Enemies of the *Christian Religion* among us, however they may differ in other Respects, do yet, by the Devil's Policy, and their own Inclinations, unite in one Body against the *establish'd Church* and *Clergy*, is this very plain one; because the *establish'd Church* is the *Fortress*, the *strong Hold* of the *Christian Religion*; and the *Clergy* the *Garrison*, or *Soldiers that defend it*.

Having made these *Observations* upon *Others*, let us in the next Place make some *Application* to *Ourselves*.

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I. First, then, let us grieve and mourn for all deluded and deluding Persons; beseeching God to give them a right Understanding in all Things relating to their eternal Happiness.

II. Considering that to the Prevalency of Immorality and Profaneness, Infidelity and Atheism, is now added the Pest of *Enthusiasm*; our Prospect, it must be own'd, is very sad and melancholy. Let us mourn and pray, and *cry mightily* to God; but not be dejected, or despond. Let us all, in our *several Stations*, with *prudent Activity*, and a *Zeal according to Knowledge*, join our Endeavours to stop the Growth of all these Mischiefs; and then with entire Resignation leave the Event to God. *Hypocrisy* and *Enthusiasm* are no new Things: These *Ignes Fatui*, these *glaring Meteors*, have often appear'd in this Nation: But they have soon disappear'd; and 'tis to be hoped they will do so now. Popular Madness, like a sudden *Land-Flood*, may run high for a Time; but seldom lasts long. True it is indeed, tho' the *Ignis Fatuus* soon disappears; it may draw People into *Ponds or Ditches*, before it does so: And the *Land-Flood*, tho' not lasting long, may *deluge a Country*, and do *infinite Mischief*, before it runs off. The Case is exactly the same

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here; and, in my humble Opinion, might deserve the Consideration of *Some*, whom I will not presume to mention. Therefore,

III. *Go not after* these Impostors, and Seducers; but shun them as you would the Plague. *Having a Form of Godliness; but denying the Power thereof: From such turn away*, says the Apostle 2 *Tim.* iii. 5. Many, I doubt not, follow them out of *mere Curiosity*; but 'tis a *vicious* Curiosity: 'Tis *sinful*; because *it is partaking of other Men's Sins*, (1 *Tim.* v. 22.) by giving Countenance and Encouragement to them, however *undesignedly*. But how many more, tho' greatly despising both their Persons and their Doctrines, yet run after them; that they may *seem* to increase the Number of their Disciples, and so give them Credit and Reputation, with a *real form'd Design*, to *help forward the Mischief* they are doing! These are the *Enemies* of our *Religion*, and *Church*, of *every Denomination*; among whom, the PAPISTS you may be sure, are neither the least industrious, nor the least delighted: These *Protestant Enthusiasts*, with all *Protestant Hereticks*, *Schismaticks*, and *false Teachers*, on the one Hand, and the *Free-thinkers*, *Infidels*, *Deists*, and

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Atheists on the other, are *doing* THEIR *Work* for them, to their Hearts Desire.

IV. Lastly, let us make so good a Use of the *Excesses* we have been considering; as by them to be put in Mind of *our own Defects*. To omit the grosser Immoralities, with which this profligate Age abounds, and concerning which the Case is so plain; how many are there, who, tho' thought by themselves and others, to be good Christians, are yet far from being so! How many who never, or at least but seldom, receive the blessed Sacrament; tho' 'tis the indispensable Duty of every Christian to receive it frequently! Who neglect private Prayer; tho' without the frequent and constant Performance of that Duty, 'tis impossible to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven! Who might come to Church on *Week-days* as well as *Sundays*, if they would; yet do not, tho' they have nothing else to do! How many, who, tho' they are not what is commonly call'd Drunkards, are yet intemperate in Drinking! Who allow themselves in unlawful Diversions, or are immoderate in lawful ones! Who, tho' not guilty of any scandalous Crime, in common Estimation, are yet carnal, sensual, worldly-minded, and *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God!* How

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many, who, being very rich, imagine they are charitable, if they now and then give a ſmall Piece of Money to the Poor; when they ought to give largely and liberally!—Who, under Pretence of *providing for their Families*, are *ſhamefully covetous*, and obſerved to be ſo by every Body but themſelves! A *dangerous Deluſion* this laſt; and very often, I fear, a fatal one. I might mention numerous Inſtances more; which, together with theſe now mention'd, you, to whom I have ſo long miniſter'd, know, and are my Witneſſes, I have often, and with the greateſt Earneſtneſs inſiſted upon. So far have I been from relaxing the *real* Obligations of our holy Religion; that, perhaps, I have been thought by Some to be too rigid and ſevere: Tho', to the beſt of my Judgment and Underſtanding, I have not err'd on either Extreme; but have with all Faithfulneſs repreſented to you the true Will of God, as reveal'd in the ſacred Scriptures. And the reſt of the Clergy, moſt of them at leaſt, can, I am confident, truly ſay the ſame of themſelves. I ſhould not have ſaid ſo much upon this Article; did not the Calumnies and lying Slanders caſt upon us by our Enemies, (tho' Clergymen themſelves) theſe proud *Phariſaical*

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